

We Claim:

1. A method for facilitating communication between a supplier and a retailer in an online environment, comprising the steps of:

receiving, from a client computer associated with a supplier, a request to view a home page associated with a retailer;

displaying the home page to the client computer, wherein the home page includes thereon at least the following options: a products option, an issues option, a performance option, and a marketing option;

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select a selected one of the products option, issues option, performance option, and marketing option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the selected one of the products option, issues option, performance option, and marketing option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving, from the client computer, identification information related the supplier; and

displaying, to the client computer, customized content associated with the selected one of the products option, issues option, performance option, and marketing option, wherein the customized content is retrieved based upon the received identification information.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request from the client computer to select the products option;

displaying, to the client computer, a plurality of products-related options including at least: a purchase order status option, a product price list option, a material description option, a general option, and a buy forecast option;

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select a selected one of the products-related options;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the selected one of the products-related options, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the purchase order status option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the purchase order status option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the purchase order status option, comprises at least a sortable table including purchase order information for each of the supplier's products sold by the retailer.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the sortable table includes at least one of the following discrete columns for each purchase order: retailer PO#, supplier PO#, product class, material code, shipto warehouse, ordered quantity, price per pound, requested delivery , acknowledged delivery date, receipt quantity, and status.

6. The method of claim 4, further comprising the following steps:

receiving, from the client computer, a request to modify a selected purchase order contained within the sortable table;

displaying a purchase order modification form to the client computer for receiving purchase order modification information;

receiving, from the client computer, a completed purchase order modification form; and

updating the content associated with the purchase order option to reflect the modification.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the purchase order modification information may include: unit price, acknowledged delivery date, or supplier PO#.

8. The method of claim 4, further comprising the following steps:

receiving, from the client computer, a request to confirm a selected purchase order contained within the sortable table;

displaying a purchase order confirmation form to the client computer for receiving purchase order confirmation information;

receiving, from the client computer, a completed purchase order confirmation form; and

updating the content associated with the purchase order option to reflect the modification.

9. The method of claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the product price list option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the product price list option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the product price option, comprises at least a listing of current price for each supplier product sold by the retailer.

10. The method of claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the material description option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the material description option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the material description option, comprises at least a sortable table including material description information for each of the supplier's products sold by the retailer.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the sortable table includes at least one of the following discrete columns for each product: product class, product item, class description, item description and material type.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the sortable table is sortable by at least one of the following criteria: sales market, product class, product item, and material type.

13. The method of claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the general option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the general option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the general option, comprises at least a indexed recitation of general terms between the supplier and the retailer.

14. The method of claim 3, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the buy forecast option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the buy forecast option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the buy forecast option, comprises at least a sortable table including buy forecast information for each of the supplier's products sold by the retailer.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the sortable table includes at least one of the following discrete columns for each product: item description, need date, shipto warehouse, projected order quantity and projected date of sale.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the sortable table is sortable by at least one of the following criteria: date range, item description, need date, and shipto warehouse.

17. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request from the client computer to select the issues option;

displaying, to the client computer, a plurality of issues-related options including at least: a product cases option, and a product returns option;

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select a selected one of the issues-related options;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the selected one of the issues-related options, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the product cases option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the product cases option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the product cases option, comprises at least a sortable table including reported product cases for a user-defined time period.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the sortable table includes at least one of the following discrete columns for each product case: case number, date opened, date closed, product class, product item, lot number, description level, and number of days open.

20. The method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:

receiving, from the client computer, a request to respond to a selected one of the product cases listed in the sortable table;

displaying, to the client computer, a product case response form, including therein a variety of fields for receiving instructions relating to the selected product case;

receiving, from the client computer, a completed product case response form; and

automatically notifying an issue response team about the received response form.

21. The method of claim 17, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the product returns option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the product returns option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the product returns option, comprises at least a sortable table including product returns information for a user-defined time period.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the sortable table includes at least one of the following discrete columns for each product case: date of return, retailer return #, supplier PO#, product class, product item, lot number, quantity returned, and return reason code.

23. The method of claim 21, further comprising the steps of:

receiving, from the client computer, a request to initiate a product recall;

displaying, to the client computer, a product recall submission form, including therein a variety of fields for receiving at least a lot number for the product to be recalled;

receiving, from the client computer, a completed product recall submission form; and

automatically notifying an product recall team about the received recall submission form.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

determining whether a submitted product recall submission form is valid;

displaying, to the client computer, an error message if it is determined that the submitted product recall submission form is invalid; and

automatically notifying an product recall team about the received recall submission form if it is determined that the submitted product recall submission for is valid.

25. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request from the client computer to select the performance option;

displaying, to the client computer, a plurality of performance-related options including at least: a purchase order performance option, a sales order performance option, a issue management performance option, and a product returns performance option;

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select a selected one of the performance-related options;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the selected one of the performance-related options, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the purchase order performance option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the purchase order performance option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the purchase order performance option, comprises at least a sortable table including purchase order performance information for a user-defined time period.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein the sortable table includes at least one of the following discrete columns for each product class: product class, total monthly receipt quantity, average monthly performance to request, and average monthly performance to acknowledgment.

28. The method of claim 26, further comprising the steps of:

receiving, from the client computer, a request to view detailed purchase order performance information for a selected product class;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, detailed purchase order performance information for the selected product class, and

displaying the retrieved detailed purchase order performance information to the client computer,

wherein the retrieved detailed purchase order performance information, comprises at least a sortable table including detailed purchase order performance information for each product within the selected product class.

29. The method of claim 25, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the sales order performance option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the sales order performance option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the sales order performance option, comprises at least a sortable table including sales order performance information for a user-defined time period.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the sortable table includes at least one of the following discrete columns for each product class: product class, LBS for month, and trend by pounds.

31. The method of claim 28, further comprising the steps of:

receiving, from the client computer, a request to view detailed sales order performance information for a selected product class;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, detailed sales order performance information for the selected product class, and

displaying the retrieved detailed sales order performance information to the client computer,

wherein the retrieved detailed sales order performance information, comprises at least a sortable table including detailed sales order performance information for each product within the selected product class.

32. The method of claim 25, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the issue management performance option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the issue management performance option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the issue management performance option, comprises at least a sortable table including issue management performance information for a user-defined time period.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein the sortable table includes at least one of the following discrete columns for each product case: case #, date opened, date closed, customer name, product class, product item, lot #, issue description, and # of days open.

34. The method of claim 25, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select the product returns performance option;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the product returns performance option, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer,

wherein the content associated with the product returns performance option, comprises at least a sortable table including product returns performance information for a user-defined time period.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein the sortable table includes at least one of the following discrete columns for each product return: product class, product item, class description, lot #, quantity returned, and return reason code.

34. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request from the client computer to select the marketing option;

displaying, to the client computer, a plurality of marketing-related options including at least: a tradeshow option, a trade advertising option, a direct mail option, an Internet advertising option, and an eSeminars option;

receiving a request, from the client computer, to select a selected one of the marketing-related options;

retrieving, from at least one server associated with the retailer, content associated with the selected one of the marketing-related options, and

displaying the retrieved content to the client computer.

35. The method of claim 34, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request, from the client computer, for more information regarding a selected one of the marketing-related options; and

automatically notifying retailer marketing personnel regarding about the received request.